Arifureta Volume 10 – WN 91-93

Chapter 91 : Mother and Daughter's Reunion

"Hic, sob, hic."

A sobbing sound of a young girl resounding nearby the pier that had turned into wreckage. The onlookers and soldiers were crowding there, but there was not even a clamor, and the place was strangely quiet.

It was because of the should be kidnapped girl of Sea-dweller tribe who flew down from the sky, the human boy who jumped into the sky and caught her, and there was the black dragon with a girl riding on its back in the sky. However, the biggest reason was how the boy greatly scolded the girl from Sea-dweller tribe. Well, actually, it was how the young girl called the boy who scolded her.

"Sob, Papa, sorry…"

"Promise me you won't do anything that dangerous again, okay?"

"Un, Myuu will."

"Okay, that's good. Come here."

"Papaa~!"

The figures of Hajime, who was on one knee as he scolded the young child, and Myuu, who obediently reflected as she scolded by him though she cried then and jumped into Hajime's chest when she was forgiven… were as normal as that of a father and his child. It was also shown by how Myuu repeatedly called him "Papa."

The situation where the should've been kidnapped child of Sea-dweller tribe "adoring" a human boy enough to treat him as her father, and how Hajime treated Myuu as his own daughter made everyone dumbfounded, not understanding what had happened. Their minds were asking the same thing. Which was, "How did it come to this?"

Hajime lifted Myuu with his arm and patted her back to calm her, and finally, the surrounding people returned to their senses and began to cause a great commotion.

As he leered at the clamoring, perplexed people, Hajime patted Myuu's back and someone hugged him from behind… when he looked over his shoulder, there was Kaori's figure whose head was on his shoulder, slightly trembling.

"I'm glad… I am really glad~, hic, hic."

This time, Kaori had begun to cry. Even though she acted firm, inside, she was worried Hajime might be dead. She believed in Hajime's survival, but there was no way she didn't feel worried about him. That added to how he went missing for the second time shortly after they finally met again, enduring it was impossible for her

"I am sorry to make you worry. But as you can see, I am full of life here. That's why, please don't cry… if Kaori cry… I will be imensely troubled."

"Uh, hic, th-then, let me stay like this for a little more…"

Troubled, Hajime patted Kaori's head whose hands were wrapped around his arm. However, maybe because she couldn't stop crying, Kaori buried her face more and more into Hajime's shoulder. Both of her hands were now tightly embracing around Hajime's stomach from behind.

"Oi, you, explain what are yo-gah!?"

"Muh? Sorry."

The above was the commander-like person who was dripping wet due to being blown away into the seas as the consequence of Hajime's jump. He didn't read the mood and tried to question Hajime. However, he was knocked by Tio (deactivated her Dragonform when she landed) who was running in short steps towards Hajime, thus the man once again fell into the sea.

Not minding the man that much, Tio came beside Hajime, held his head and pressed it into her cleavage.

“What the—!? Oi, Tio.”

“This one believes, thou know? This one believes… even so, Master… too much time hath passed until this reunion.”

When Hajime quietly looked at Tio’s face from her cleavage, her expression was one of ascerting her important one inside her arms with tears accumulated on the edges of her eyes. This time, Hajime felt it couldn’t be helped and let her do as she pleases because he had relied on her to do something unreasonable.

While that happened, Myuu said, “Myuu will hug Papa too~,” and she clung to Hajime’s nape. Shia, who was beside Yue, who was beside Hajime, began to hug his free arm.

The surrounding gazes couldn’t even see Hajime, as his whole body was covered by a beautiful little girl, beautiful girls, and a beautiful woman. The surrounding gazes were gradually changing from one of perplexion to one of looking at them warmly. Even the agitated vigilante corps and soldiers had lowered their arms, dumbfounded.

“You people… not only once, but twice… I will arrest you for obstructing the Kingdom’s soldiers’ work.”

Once again crawled up onto the pier, the commander-like person was angrily glaring at Hajime’s party. With weapon in hand, he seemed to be ready to attack at any moment. Though Hajime couldn’t be thought of as the kidnapper from how the kidnapped Myuu was abnormally too attached him, there were too many unknown things about him, so of course the man wanted to question him.

Ever Hajime since the beginning had wanted to explain that he was entrusted by the head of Fhu-ren’s guild branch, Ilwa, to escort Myuu. However, he was troubled as he had nothing to prove that, but now it was at hand.

With “Treasure Box” returned by Tio, Hajime took out his status plate and the request form from Ilwa, then he presented them to the commander.

“… Let me see… a “Gold” rank!? Moreover, a direct request from the head of Fhuren’s branch!?”

Other than the request form, there was also the letter from Ilwa where the details were written. It was addressed to the Elisen’s mayor and the top brass of the soldiers who resided in this town, the man before the party. After reading the letter intently, the commander spated a big sigh and after he hesitated a little, he gave up as he drooped his shoulder then saluted.

“… The request has been completed. Nagumo-dono.”

“It is good that all doubts have been cleared. You must have things that you want to ask, but we are in a hurry. So I want you to not ask anything because… I want to let this child meet her mother right now. It’s okay, right?”

“Of course it is. However, as a soldier of this Kingdom… I can’t overlook about the dragon, you jumping, and the ship-like thing from before.”

Radically changing from the previous oppressive manner, the commander’s attitude became one which paid Hajime with respect. Even so, he appealed with his strong gaze to Hajime that it was impossible to overlook those.

“About that, can we just talk about it in another time? I am going to stay in this Elisen for a while, after all. I also think there’s no need to report about it to the kingdom because they probably already know about it…”

“Mm, I see. Anyway, it’s good as long as we can have a chance to talk. Now please return that child to her mother… does she know of her mother’s condition?”

"No, she doesn't. But it's okay. After all, we have the best medicine and healer here."

"I see. Then let me question you once things are settled."

The commander lastly introduced himself as Saluz, then he went to control the crowd by dispersing the onlookers. A dutiful person.

The people who know Myuu seemed to want to call out to her, but Hajime used his gaze to stop them because much time would pass before she returns to her mother if they did that.

"Papa, Papa. We are returning to home. Mama is waiting! Myuu wants to meet Mama."

"Of course… so let's hurry and meet her."

Pulling Hajime's hand, Myuu urged on with "Hurry, hurry!" It had been around two months since the last time she returned to her house and mother. So it couldn't be helped. Though she was usually laughing as she was taken care of by Hajime's party on their way, at night when the time to sleep came, she wanted to be spoiled because she indeed missed her mother.

On their way to Myuu's house, with Myuu as their guide, Kaori came close to him and asked him with a small, uneased voice.

"Hajime-kun. About what the soldier from before said…"

"Well, it doesn't seem to be life threatening. It's just that her wound is rather severe and it's also the physiological one… well there's no need to worry about the latter with Myuu being here. So please check her injury."

"Un. Leave it to me."

While having that kind of conversation, they heard a commotion from the road ahead. It was the voice of a young woman and several voices of men and women.

“Lemia, calm down! It’s impossible with the condition of your legs!”

“That’s right, Lemia-chan. Myuu-chan will surely come back!”

“I don’t want to! Didn’t you say Myuu have come back!? Then, I must go to see her! I need to welcome her!”

Apparently, the woman tried to get out of the house, and she was stopped by several men and women. It was likely because an acquaintance had told Myuu’s mother of her return.

With the resounding of the frantic voice of the woman called Lemia, Myuu’s face bloomed and shone. Then, as loud as she could, she called out to the woman in her mid twenties, who had collapsed at the entrance door, while running.

“Mama~~!!”

“—!? Myuu!? Myuu!”

Running with all her might and with an expression full of smile Myuu jumped into the bosom of the woman — her mother, Lemia, who tried to steady her legs before the front door.

Seeing the figures of a mother closely and tightly embracing her daughter, expressing she didn’t want to be separated again from her child made the surrounding people look at them warmly.

For so many, many times Lemia repeatedly said, “I am sorry,” to Myuu. It was either because she had lost sight of Myuu or her incapability to come looking for her or may both.

Tears fell as Lemia both feel relieved from her daughter’s safety and also the grief from being incapable of protecting hear. Looking at Lemia with anxious eyes, Myuu gently patted her mother’s head.

“It’s okay. Mama, Myuu is here. So there’s nothing to worry.”

“Myuu…”

Never did she thought she would be comforted by her four year old daughter, so Lemia's teary eyes unconsciously wide opened and she watched Myuu.

Myuu was also looking straight at Lemia and there's indeed worry about Lemia lodged inside her eyes. Myuu was a mama's girl and couldn't stand being alone before she was kidnapped, and although she also had painful times herself, she was more brokenhearted about her mother than herself in this reunion.

Surprised by that, Lemia was unconsciously watching Myuu in seriousness which made Myuu smiled, and this time she was the one who hugged Lemia tightly. Lemia wasn't that badly injured both in body and mind, but she was suffering from the sleepless night, overly worrying about Myuu, but it seemed her daughter had returned all grown up more than before.

This fact made Lemia inadvertently raised a wry smile. With her shoulders relaxed and her tears stopped, Lemia was looking at her daughter with eyes filled with love.

Myuu and Lemia once again hugged each other, but suddenly, Myuu raised a scream-like voice.

"Mama! Your legs! What happened!? Are you injured!? Is it hurt!?"

Apparently, Myuu noticed the state of Lemia's legs from over Lemia's shoulder. Both of her feet peeking from Lemia's long skirt were bandaged all over, they were in a miserable state.

This was the thing Saluz talked about, and it was what Hajime's party heard from the young man on their way to Elisen. The thing that made the Sea-dweller tribe agitated was not only was Myuu kidnapped, but also how her mother was seriously injured that it became impossible for her to walk.

Though Myuu said she was kidnapped when she was separated from Lemia, the Sea-dweller tribe wouldn't be able to say it was a kidnapping

unless there's an eyewitness. They were able to declare so because it seemed Lemia had actually encountered the kidnappers.

Lemia had discovered suspicious men erasing their footprints in the sand near the coast when she was looking for Myuu when she got separated from her. Though she felt a bad premonition, she approached the men to ask whether they know her daughter… the men's faces were expressing "Oh shit" and began to chant all of a sudden.

Convinced the men had a part on Myuu's disappearance, Lemia tried to somehow get Myuu back, running along the footprints.

However, one of the men fought back by firing flame bullets. Fortunately, she avoided being hit on her upper body but her legs were hit instead, then she was blown into the sea by the impact. Lemia lost her consciousness from both the pain and impact. When she woke up, she was being helped by the people from vigilante corps who went looking for her because she have not returned.

Her life was saved, but as the time passed, Lemia still couldn't feel her legs, thus she became unable to walk nor to swim. Naturally, Lemia tried to search for her daughter, but she couldn't due to her legs. In the end, she could do nothing but to leave it to the vigilante corps and the Kingdom.

Lemia was in a state where she couldn't even stand properly now.

Lemia smiled to try not to make her daughter worry more than this, so she tried telling Myuu, "It's okay." However, faster than her, Myuu asked for help from her "Papa" whom she depended on the most in this world.

"Papaa! Please help Mama! Mama's legs are injured!"

"Eh!? M-Myuu? Just now…"

"Papa! Hurryy!"

"Ara? Arara? You said Papa? Myuu, who is this Papa?"

Confused, lot of "?"s floated above Lemia's head. The surrounding people were also clamoring. A lot of absurd remarks were flying from here and there such as:

"Lemia… has remarried? No… NO WAY."

"Finally, Lemia-chan's spring has arrived again! Congratulation!"

"It's lie, right? Someone, please tell me it is a lie… My Lemia-san…"

"Papa… Myuu said Papa!? Isn't it me!?"

"I am sure it is someone with stage name like Ku***ngpapa, yup, it must be it."

"Oi, time for an emergency conference! All members of "Watching Lemia-san and Myuu-chan warmly" gather now! Storm is coming!"

Apparently, Lemia and Myuu, this mother and daughter were popular here. Lemia was still young, in the mid of her twenties. Although she was considerably emaciated now, she had a well-sculpted looks similar to Myuu's. It was easy to imagine how attention grabbing her beauty would be once she was recovered, so it was understandable for her to be popular.

With the commotion that kept growing, Hajime's expression cramped expressing, "I don't want to go there now." Though he thought these people would understand once he explained the details about how Myuu came to call Hajime papa, he was just a "substitute (though inwardly they didn't think so)" of her Papa, and he wasn't aiming to marry Lemia, but the current misunderstanding were growing at an uncontrollable pace.

However, Hajime thought it was a godsend. After all, Hajime and his party wouldn't be able to continue their journey unless they left Myuu to her mother. It will be a goodbye once his party conquered «Meljeene Bottom Sea Ruin». Hajime thought Myuu had come close to Hajime's party because she was in a place away from her hometown and been forcibly separated from mother, so once she returned to her mother her

desire to be by Hajime's party's side would surely weakened as time passed, though she would be saddened at first. The surrounding people were strongly concerned about Lemia and her daughter, so they would surely helped them.

"Papaa! Hurrry! Please help Mama!"

Myuu's gaze was firmly looking at where Hajime was, thus Lemia and the surrounding people noticed Hajime once they traced Myuu's gaze. Hajime gave up and walked to where the mother and daughter were.

"Papa, Mama is…"

"It's okay Myuu… I will surely heal her. So please don't make such a tearful look."

"Okay…"

Hajime rustled Myuu's hair who was looking at him with tearful expression, then he moved his gaze to Lemia. Lemia was watching Hajime, dumbfounded. While thinking it couldn't be helped for her to do that, Hajime decided to carry her into the house to heal her because his appearance had made the commotion grow we more.

"I am sorry, but excuse me for a moment, okay?"

"Eh? —!? Arara?"

Hajime lifted Lemia in princess carry while looking like he didn't feel her weight at all. Then, he carried Lemia into the house guided by Myuu. With Hajime carrying Lemia, screams and roars were raised behind them, which he ignored. Lemia herself could only blinking from being suddenly lifted and carried by Hajime.

Having entered the house, he found a sofa in the living room, so Hajime slowly lowered Lemia there. Following that, while watching the blinking Lemia who was sitting on the sofa before him, Hajime called out to Kaori.

“Kaori, how is she?”

“Let me look at her… Lemia-san, I will touch your foot. Please say if it hurts.”

“Y-Yes? Umm, what’s with this situation?”

When she thought her kidnapped daughter had suddenly returned, a man whom her daughter adored and called Papa appeared. Furthermore, unknown beautiful girls and a beautiful woman gathered in her house. Such a situation made Lemia eyebrows frowned, troubled.

While that happened, Kaori’s examination ended and she told Lamia that her damaged legs’ nerves would be able to be recovered with her healing magic.

“However, it will take some time. The damaged nerves were in delicate places, so I will need around three days for there not to have any side effects to occur. Also, I think it will be better for them to heal little by little. Although it will be inconvenient, please hang on until then because I will surely heal you.”

“Ara ara, maa maa. I had thought I wouldn’t be able to walk anymore… how can I repay you…”

“Fufu, don’t worry about it. You are Myuu-chan’s mother after all.”

“Umm, come to think of it, what is everyone’s relation to Myuu… furthermore, umm… why did Myuu call that person “Papa”…”

While Kaori immediately begin to treat Lemia’s legs, Hajime’s party decided to explain Lemia the details about things. About how they met Myuu in Fhuren, the riot, and how did Hajime came to be called Papa. Having heard everything while being treated by Kaori, Lemia deeply bowed her head in place, then repeatedly thanked them in tears.

“Truly, how can repay you for this… It is thanks to you that I was able to reunite with my daughter. I will surely repay this kindness of yours even with my life. As long as it is something I can do, whatever it is…”

Although Hajime's party told her to not mind it, Lemia couldn't consent not to repay the benefactors of her daughter's life. In the mean time, the treatment from Kaori ended for today. When they told Lemia they were looking for an inn, Lemia thought it was a godsend and asked them to just use her house.

"Please at least let me do this much. Fortunately, this house is big, so there's room for everyone. Please don't hold back and use this house while you are staying in Elisen. Besides, Myuu will be happy with this. Right, Myuu? You are happy that Hajime-san and the others stay in our house, right?"

"? Papa is going somewhere?"

Hearing Lemia's words, Myuu who was resting her head on Lemia's lap woke up, blinking, she was dumbfounded. Apparently, she seemed to think it was a natural thing for Hajime to stay in her house. Her expression said she didn't understand why Lemia asked her that question.

"I thought of putting a little distance once she returned to her own mother…"

"Ara ara, ufufu. It isn't good for Papa to take a distance from her daughter, you know?"

"No, didn't I explained it before? We are…"

"I know that you will continue your travel sooner or later. However, that's why please keep being her "Papa" until that day comes. If you take a distance know, then it would be a sudden goodbye… right?"

"… Well, if you say so…"

"Ufufu, it is okay too for you to always be her "Papa", you know? After all, I have said "with my life" before…"

Saying so, “Ufufu &#9825”, Lemia laughed with one hand on her slightly blushing cheek. Such a calming and beautiful smile would normally calmed anyone… but a blizzard generated around Hajime.

“Please don’t joke like that… the atmosphere turned cold now…”

“Ara ara, how popular. However, it is almost five years since I lost my husband… Myuu also want a Papa, right?”

“Fue? Isn’t Papa Papa?”

“Ufufu, she said it, so Papa?”

The blizzard became much more intense. Though he didn’t know whether Lemia actually notice the cold atmosphere, her calm aura made her words neither be taken as a joke nor a serious one. “That’s a good courage, you!,” was what Yue and the girls’ gazes said, which was easily warded off by Lemia with a smile along with, “Ara ara, ufufu.” She might be an unexpectedly great person.

In the end, the party decided to stay in Lemia’s house. When time to allocate the rooms, Lemia said, “Shouldn’t the husband and wife be together?” which responded with silent reply from Yue and the girls. Then, Myuu said, “Myuu will sleep with Papa and Mama,” which turned the place into a chaos, but at least it calmed down for now.

The party were going to conquer the next Great Dungeon from tomorrow onwards, so they needed to resupply and mend the broken and lost fixtures while it was also necessary for them to train on the newly acquired Age of Gods magic. However, while thinking he couldn’t neglect his few remaining time with Myuu, Hajime dozed off on the bed.

* * *

Three days after that.

How strangely short distance between Lemia and Hajime made the bloodshot glares of envy from men of Sea-dweller tribe stabbed Hajime.

The neighbourhood aunties were also gossiping about Hajime and Lemia. In addition, Yue and the girls' approach became even more intense as they became ill-humored. Yue at night was also becoming more lovely. Even so, Hajime completed the party's preparation and about to begin to search for «Meljeene Bottom Sea Ruin».

When the time come for them to part, Myuu wore a truly lonely expression. She greatly pulled Hajime's back hair, but he somehow managed shake her off on the pier and board the fixed submarine. Waving her hands, Myuu firmly shouted, "Papa, have a safe trip!" Following that, with an atmosphere that could neither be taken as a joking nor a serious one, Lemia waved her hand saying, "Have a safe trip, D-A-R-L-I-N-G &#9825."

From the side, they could be seen as wife and daughter who were sending the husband off to work. Sharp glares were coming from Yue and the girls behind him and the surrounding Sea-dweller tribe. It made Hajime slightly hesitant to return here after conquering the next dungeon.

Chapter 92 : Meljeene Bottom Sea Ruin

Northwest, 300 kilometers away from【Sea Town, Elisen】.

It was the location of one of the Seven Great Dungeon, 【Meljeene Bottom Sea Ruin】, that the party once heard from Miledi Raisen.

However, the party didn't have much time to listen to Miledi at that time, so she only told them that the "moon" must be accompanied by "Guryuu-en's proof" without the detailed location.

And so, Hajime's party only advanced through the vast ocean in accordance to the direction and distance they were told. However, they didn't find anything when they searched the pointed location in the bottom of the sea during daytime. The party had thought they'd be able

to find some kind of trace because it was a bottom sea ruin, but it seemed they were too naive.

The pointed location was rather shallow compared to the other place in circumference of 100 kilometers, so it must be the correct place… that was what Hajime thought.

Reluctantly, the party decided to stop the search and wait until night, when the moon has come out, as Miledi had told them. The current time was sunset. The sun was shining in red with half of itself hidden beyond the horizon, brightening the world for the last time today. The sky and sea were dyed in orange while a straight road was produced by the reflection of the sun on the sea from over the horizon.

A beautiful spectacle of nature no matter whichever world it was. Hajime was watching the setting sun on the deck of the moored submarine. Abruptly, he thought of something unbelievable, which was whether it was possible to return to Japan if he advances on the road of light leading towards the sun. He smiled wryly as he was thinking about something.

“Did something happen?”

Noticing the change in Hajime, Kaori called out to him.

Because she was taking a shower inboard a while ago, her hair was damp. No, not only Kaori. Yue, Shia, and Tio had gone up to deck before he was aware of it. Everyone had taken the shower inside the sub that Hajime took pride in. Their flushed cheeks, the damp hair stuck on their cheeks, and nape, made their figures truly captivating. The water from the shower room was set to rain right from the ceiling, so it wasn’t a problem for the four of them to shower all at once.

Incidentally, the reason why Hajime was on the deck, looking at the sunset was because of the possibility of taken into the shower room if he was careless.

When the girls were about to take the shower, Tio invited Hajime which gained approval from Kaori, Shia, and of course, Yue. Then, the four cut

off the escape routes of Hajime's refusal. Hajime, who will not embrace any other woman except Yue, had clearly said he won't have a naked skin ship with other woman.

However, the girls ignored Hajime as they smiled. Leering at Yue who was blushing while making a flirtatious smile, Kaori and Tio who were pinning Hajime from the sides, and while Shia tried to put Hajime unconscious using Doryukken from behind. Feeling the impending danger of his body, Hajime seriously ran away and went to the deck… but, isn't it a shame for a man to deny the placed meal before him?

Hajime thought that was a foolish question and shook his head, then he replied to Kaori.

"I am just recalling a little about Japan. After all, the scene here isn't that much different from there."

"… I see. Yeah, it really is. It is just like the evening sun I have seen in the sea before… somehow it makes me feel nostalgic. Though not even half a year had passed, eh."

"That's because the everyday here is too eventful."

Having seated beside Hajime, Kaori was agreeing Hajime's words while looking at the distance. She must be recalling the days she went through in Japan.

Maybe because she felt the loneliness from the conversation of the two, Yue trotted her still flushing body towards Hajime and sat on his lap. She entrusted her back to Hajime's chest even though she must be feeling hot. Then, she began to watch Hajime right under his face.

Her eyes were obviously expressing she wanted them to let her join their conversation. Yue was feeling lonely, and at the same time she wanted to hear about Hajime's hometown. Hajime, while inwardly knocked out by Yue's cuteness, stretched Kaori's cheek, who was sitting beside him, to scold her because a Hanya had appeared.

With only that, her mood became better which made Hajime felt complicated. Hajime thought, *'Why would she do this much for someone who won't accept her feelings…'* Though he thought of that, he won't say it out loud. After all, it would be rude to her feelings if he did.

While he was stretching Kaori's cheek, and at this time, Shia drew closer to him from opposite Kaori with sparkling eyes. She was obviously signaling she wanted to be cared, too. With his empty other hand, he stroked Shia's rabbit ear. "Ehehe~," Shia made a relaxed smile.

His back was leaned to by Tio. She didn't demand anything in particular, just quietly sitting back to back against him. However, he understood Tio was relaxed, and she entrusted her weight to him. It was slightly unexpected, since Hajime's only thought was to throw her into the sea if she makes a perverted demand.

Then, maybe because she felt something from Hajime's aura, Tio's body shuddered and trembled for a moment while her breathing turned rough…

Hajime's party cuddled close to each other above the vast sea. It would take a while until night time came, and the moon will begin to shine. So to kill time, Hajime began to speak a little about his hometown.

Hajime's story fascinated Yue and the other two while Kaori was supplementing him with a radiant smile. Time passed swiftly as they enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere and the sun had completely gone down to the other side of the horizon, and the moon had began to shine in its place.

Thinking it was about the time, Hajime took out the pendant which was the proof of having conquered 【Guryuu-en Great Volcano】 from his breast pocket. The design of the pendant was of a woman hanging a lantern and there was a hole on the lantern, becoming hollow.

Even while staying at Elisen, Hajime had taken out the pendant and held it towards the moon, and also supplied it with magic power, but there was no change in particular.

'Just what should be done to the moon and pendant?', was what he thought while tilting his head. For now, Hajime tried to hold the pendant towards the moon. The moon could be seen from hole of the lantern design.

He waited for a while, but there was no change. Hajime, not understanding what to do, sighed and began to try another method.

But at that time, change appeared in the pendant.

"Waah, the light is gathering in the lantern. It's beautiful~."

"It is… a mysterious sight. Even though the lantern part is actually hollow…"

Shia was admiring the sight and Kaori, with shining eyes, agreed with her.

Just as the two said, the lantern part was absorbing the moonlight and light began to accumulate inside it. In accordance to that, the hollow part was filled by the light. Also becoming interested in it, Yue and Tio watched the pendant Hajime held up.

"Even though I've also tried it last night…"

"Hmm, Master. It might be because it won't do if it isn't here, right?"

It might be just as Tio guessed. Before long, the lantern finished accumulating the light and the pendant was now clad in light. At the same time, a light shot straight from the lantern, pointing to a certain location on the sea's surface.

"… What an exquisite production. Truly different from Miledi's."

"It is. It really is fantasy-like, even I'm rather impressed by it."

"Guided by the moonlight," it was such a romance-like thing which made not only Hajime, but also Yue and the rest raised voices of admiration. The impression gained by Shia, just like Hajime and Yue,

was strong as someone who had entered Miledi's 【Miledi Great Dungeon】.

The party didn't know how long the light would be released from the pendant's lantern, so the submarine immediately sailed, lead by the light.

The sea at night was dark. Or maybe it would be better to say that everything was black. And even though the surface of the was still bright because of the moonlight, they were lead into the waters and thus everything instantly turned dark. The light released by the submarine and the pendant was the only thing cutting through the dark sea.

The light, passing through the glass made from front crystal (a type of sturdy and transparent ore) in front of the submarine, was pointing at the bottom of the sea.

The location pointed was the rock wall zone of the bottom of the sea. Numerous distorted rock walls were joined to form a mountain range. It was a place the party had searched during the daytime but it resulted in nothing… but when the submarine approached the rock pointed by the pendant's light, a tremor began to generated along with a strong rumbling sound.

The sound and tremor was caused by the rock wall that began to move. One of the rock's part was split in two, opening to the right and left like a door. The dark road lead inside was as though it was inviting one to the netherworld.

"I see… so that's why we can't find it no matter how much we tried. How foolish of me to think we will be able to find it if we were lucky."

"… There's no helping it, but it was fun."

"Yue is right. Don't you think it was an amazing experience to sightsee the bottom of the sea of this different world?"

Hajime's shoulders drooped as he understood the search they did during daytime was in vain, but it seemed Yue and Kaori quite enjoyed it.

Hajime moved the submarine and the party entered the crack. The pendant's lantern still had around half of its accumulated light, but it had stopped releasing the light. Only the submarine's light was shining inside the dark sea now.

"Umm~, this one had thought this since hearing about the bottom sea ruin, but wouldn't it be impossible for ordinary people to enter this labyrinth without this "submarine" thing?"

"… It's impossible unless one using a strong barrier."

"It will also be impossible if they can't control the air, light, and water current at the same time, eh."

"But, it is necessary to conquer 【Guryuu-en Great Volcano】 to come here, so I think people who are capable of conquering the Great Dungeon are able to enter.

"Maybe we are supposed to use Spatial magic."

Entering deeper on the underwater road, Hajime's party were considering other ways to conquer this dungeon without a submarine. They were impressed by the fantastic entrance, but indeed, once they thought about it normally, unless there were several top class magic users, it was impossible to enter the dungeon. A troublesome point similar to the other Great Dungeons.

With caution, Hajime's party watched the bottom sea through the front crystal.

And at that time,

FwwwOOOOoooooosh~!!

"Uwoh!?"

“Nh!”

“Wawah!”

“Kyah!”

“What the—!?”

The side of the submarine suddenly received an impact and immediately, the submarine was thrown towards a direction. Just like the time they were thrown into the magma’s swift current, the submarine was turned around and around, but the party had already came up with a countermeasure for it. Using the gravity stone installed at the bottom of the submarine to increase the weight, the party stabilized the it.

“Uh, I don’t want to taste this twirling again~.”

Shia’s face paled as she recalled the time they got swept underground of 【Guryuu-en Great Volcano】, and shook her head to stop recalling it.

“Didn’t we recover immediately? I already said it’ll be okay from now on. But more importantly, just where does this current led to…”

While smiling wryly at such a Shia, Hajime observed the outside through front crystal. The Green Light stone’s light was circulating around the dark cave, letting him pictured the surrounding. From what he could see, the party seemed to have been swept by the current into a huge round cave.

While operating the submarine, Hajime’s party advanced by following the current. After a while, the “Farsight stone” installed in the stern caught innumerable objects shining in reddish black.

“They seem to be approaching us… Well, they are most likely demonic beasts clad in reddish black magic power, huh.”

“… Shall we?”

When Hajime muttered, Yue, who was sitting by his side, was gathering magic power in her hand, and said in gangster-like tone, but she still looked cute.

“No, let’s use weapon here. I also want to confirm their effectiveness.”

Hajime operated the gimmick on the back of the submarine. Then, numerous pet-bottle sized torpedoes that had dyed Ancadi’s Oasis in red, was launched. Hajime thoroughly painted them so they looked like smiling mischievously sharks.

Because they were inside the swift current, the torpedoes’ propulsion could only move them to a small degree, and it resulted with them scattering like sea mines.

The submarine advanced ahead ,and before long, the numerous demonic beasts clad in reddish black magic power with appearance of flying fish entered the cluster of torpedoes.

BOOoOOoooOOoom!!!

Grand explosions generated in succession from behind the submarine and a large amount of bubbles wrapped the group of flying fish-lookalike. Afterwards, the bodies of flying fish-lookalike were tore apart by the impact and the flesh and blood were scattered from inside the appearing bubbles, looking like seaweed thrown into a swift current.

“Yup, it has more power than before. The improvement is a success.”

“Uwaah~, Hajime-san. Just now, there was something with eyes of a fish being swept outside.”

“Shia, those art actually dead fishes.”

“Once again it makes me think the artifacts Hajime-kun made are a foul.”

From then on, Hajime’s party advanced while easily beating the flying fish-lookalike they frequently encountered.

They advanced without knowing how long it would be.

At that time they began to notice the sense of incompatibility of the unchanging scenery. Hajime's party arrived at a place where the surrounding walls had been randomly destroyed. When they looked carefully, torn heads of flying fish-lookalike were placed between the rock walls with their hollow eyes looking at the sea.

"… Hmm, isn't this the place we passed before?"

"… Seems so. Are we going in circles?"

Apparently, Hajime's party were going in circles in an annulus ring cave. They had thought the Great Dungeon was ahead of them so they advanced, but Hajime was doubtful that he had mistaken a road here, as if it was a normal bottom sea cave. Resultantly, the party now didn't advance according to the laid road, and carefully searched the surrounding for any clues.

As a result,

"Ah, Hajime-kun. There's one there too!"

"With this, it is the fifth place…"

The party discovered several place inside the cave that were carved with fifty centimeters long crest of Meljeene. The carved crest of Meljeene was of pentagram with lines connected to each five points and the center was carved with crescent moon-like design. It was similar to the five places in this annulus ring cave.

For a thorough examination, Hajime's party approached the crest they first discovered. Because they were exposed to the swift current, Hajime took care in controlling the submarine.

"Well, there are five places with pentagram, so if the remaining light inside the pendant is used…"

Muttering, Hajime took out the pendant he wore on his neck and held it before the front crystal. Then, the pendant reacted and light was released straight from the lantern. Following that, the light touched the crest and the crest shone.

“It will be disastrous for people who come here using magic… if they didn’t notice this immediately, their magic power would be depleted.”

Just as Kaori said, this RPG-like method would be too cruel for people who somehow survived only by maintaining their magic. It might be because the objective was to make them reach their limit in a different sense than 【Guryuu-en Great Volcano】.

Afterwards, three more crest in their own location was poured with light from the lantern, and the party arrived before the last crest. The light collected inside the lantern decreased when it was released to light up the crest, and the remaining light had enough for only one more usage.

Hajime held up the pendant and poured the last crest with the light, finally, a way to advance from this annulus ring cave opened. With a rumbling sound, the wall of the cave split in two.

Not much happened as the party advanced into the interior, but the water was descending right to below. Then, the submarine was wrapped with floating feeling as it was falling down.

“Ohh?”

“Nh.”

“Hyah!?”

“Nuoh.”

“Hauu!”

Respectively the five of them raised different scream. Hajime was enduring the floating feeling between his groin. Then, the submarine hit the hard ground with a roaring sound. The severe impact was

transmitted into the interior, and Kaori whose body wasn't that strong raised a groan.

"Kh… Kaori, are you okay?"

"Uhh, I-I'm okay. More importantly, here is?"

While frowning, Kaori looked at the outside through the front crystal, and unlike a while ago, the outside was not sea water but a cavity. Because there was no sign of demonic beast, Hajime's party went outside.

Outside the submarine was a huge hemispherical space. When they looked above, there was a large hole, but they didn't know what kind of principle caused the water's surface to sway to and fro. Without any drop of water, it was swaying to and fro, and it was the place where Hajime's party fallen to.

"Looks like here is the real thing. Rather than a bottom sea ruin, it is a cave though."

"… It's good that there isn't water everywhere."

Returning the submarine into "Treasure Box," Hajime urged Yue and the others to advance into the passage they could be seen inside the cave… but he called out to Yue before the party moved.

"Yue."

"Nn."

With just that, Yue immediately created a barrier around them.

Momentarily, laser-like water current attacked them like meteors from above. The laser made of compressed water was similar to "Rupture" Yue used in 【Raisen Great Dungeon】. If one gets hit by it, a hole would be easily created in their body.

However, Yue's barrier was extremely strong even if it was put cast in a hurry. As a proof, it easily blocked the incoming attack from above.

Because Hajime promptly perceived the rise in magic power and killing intent, Yue who promptly answered him, the surprise attack was no longer a surprising one. Naturally, the moment Hajime called out to Yue, Shia and Tio had guessed the attack and was undisturbed by it.

However, Kaori didn't react the same way as them.

"Kyaa!?"

The too sudden, and the intense attacks made her instinctively raised a scream. She immediately clung on Hajime who was beside her.

"I-I am sorry."

"No, don't mind it."

Sneaking a glance at Hajime whom she parted from, Kaori would usually blushing here, but Kaori's complexion didn't look good. She seem to be a little depressed from exposing her disgraceful behavior when she clinged onto Hajime.

Also, she was once again shocked by Yue's proficiency in magic.

When she was still with Kouki's party, Kaori also used defense magic to assist Suzu. She trained hard, and her activation speed was not inferior to a "Barrier Master" like Suzu. Even so, when compared it to Yue, her defensive magic was child's play.

She had felt "that" when Hajime's party rescued them from 【Orcus Great Dungeon】, she understood, but she pushed her "inferiority complex" into the bottom of her mind because only when she could do that would she be able to stay by Hajime's side. However, the question whether she would only be a burden crossed her mind again.

"Are you alright?"

"Eh? Ah, nothing. There's nothing wrong."

"… I see."

Kaori immediately tried to deceive him by making a forced smile. Although Hajime slightly narrowed his eyes towards her action, he didn't say anything.

His action made Kaori feel a little lonely, but relieved at the same time. Then, she noticed Yue, who continued to block the rain of dread, staring at her. Her eyes seem to see through Kaori's heart, which made Kaori put strength in her eyes and stared back at Yue.

Kaori would not let her feelings be laughed at like that time. After all, if that happens, the pretty girl before her who received Hajime's love would stop to recognize her as a threat.

That… was something she wouldn't be able to endure.

Receiving Kaori's powerful gaze, Yue smiled a little and once again looked above. At the same time, Tio fired her flame to burn the ceiling. With that, the culprit of the attack fell in a tatter.

It was a barnacle-like demonic beast. A lot of them were sticking on the ceiling, shooting "Rupture" from the hole above. A physiological disgust-inviting spectacle.

Maybe because it was still an underwater creature, it was weak to flames and was immediately burnt by Tio's flame magic, "Spiral Flame."

After defeating those barnacle-lookalike, Hajime's party walked into the passage. They went lower than the previous room, and even the seawater reached their thighs.

"Ah~, it's hard to walk…"

"… Should I get off?"

With splashing sound as they advance through the seawater, Hajime started to complain. And so, Yue, who was sitting on his shoulder, asked. Yue was carried by Hajime because with her height, she would be soaked faster than anyone else.

Hajime returned a gaze saying there's no problem while he ignoring Kaori's and Shia's envying gaz. Then, he put his hand on Yue's thigh so she would not fall, firmly fixing her in place. Yue was also wrapping her hand around Hajime's neck.

Kaori and Shia were sending even more and more envying gazes, but they were now focusing on another problem; an attack from demonic beasts.

The appearing demonic beasts looked like shurikens. They moved in a straight line towards their target while rotating in high-speed, but sometimes they also curved on the fly. Hajime smoothly pulled Donner and unhesitatingly fired, shooting down everything in the air. Although some died with their bodies still intact, the dead demonic beasts which floated on the surface of water had a shape of a starfish.

In addition, having perceived sea snake-like demonic beasts swimming fast in the water below them, Yue skewered them using spear of ice.

"… Aren't they too weak?"

Except Kaori, all of the party members agreed with Hajime's mutter.

Enemies inside a Great Dungeon were theoretically strong individually and became troublesome if more than one appeared. However, the starfishes and sea snakes were similar to the demonic beasts who attacked them in the sea once they got out of the sea volcano, or at least that weak. Truly unbefitting of a Great Dungeon's demonic beast.

Excluding Kaori who didn't know much about Great Dungeon, everyone was tilting their heads, but their answer would be shown inside the huge space on the other end of the passage.

"…The heck?"

As soon as Hajime's party entered the space, translucent jelly-like body blocked the entrance to the passage.

"Let me do it! Uryaaah!!"

Immediately, Shia, who was at the rear, swung Doryukken to break the wall. However, the surface only scattered, but the jelly-like wall didn't break. Following that, the scattered remains stuck on Shia's breasts.

"Hyaa! What's with this thing!?"

Shia raised a voice of confusion and shock. When Hajime's party turned around, the clothing around Shia's breasts was melting. The jelly thing wrapped around her clothing and undergarment, and Shia's voluptuous twin hills began to become more and more exposed.

"Shia, don't move!"

Immediately, Tio perfectly burnt the sprayed jelly-thingy. A little part of Shia's breasts where the jelly was attached to was swollen red. It looked like the jelly blocking the entrance had a rather strong acidity.

"Kh! There's more coming!"

Hajime warned, and right after they moved away from the wall of jelly, numerous tentacles attacked from above. They looked sharp like spears, but their appearance was similar to the jelly that was blocking the entrance.

"Honestly, the combination of Yue as defense and Tio as offence feels like a foul play."

An impregnable defense and at the same time a one-sided offense. That's why Hajime could do nothing but mutter so. Seeing it as a chance, Shia was slowly approaching Hajime's side while empathizing her exposed cleavage. Truly sly, as she began to pleading with upward glance while blushing.

"Excuse me, Hajime-san. It's burnt, so can Hajime-san rub it with medicine?"

"… Sigh, don't you see our situation?"

“Well, I think it’ll be okay because Yue-san and Tio-san are unbeatable… Also, if I don’t do some appeal in this situation, I will be overshadowed by Kaori-san too…”

Shia said while approaching Hajime to show off the burn on her cleavage.

Then,

“Bring the holy ground and healing unto this place ‘Heaven’s Blessing.'”

Kaori healed Shia’s injury while smiling nicely. “Ahh~, even though it was a chance to get my breasts touched!,” Shia grieved while everyone was looked at her coldly.

“Hm? …Hajime, these jelly seems to melt magic, too.”

While he was giving the grieving Shia a cold look, Yue said to him. When he looked at it, he could see parts of Yue’s barrier melting.

“Mhm, this one thought so. This one felt it was strange that the previous flame lost its force. It seems it even melt the magic power inside the flame.”

If what Tio said was right, then these jelly was capable of melting magic power. It was a strong and troublesome ability. Suitable for a Great Dungeon’s demonic beast.

Though it must haven’t heard what Hajime thought of it in his mind, finally, a figure of a demonic beast that was manipulating the jelly had appeared.

The thing appeared as it was permeating through the small cracks in the ceiling, halted in mid-air, and began to reshape. A translucent humanoid with fin-like limbs, and its whole body carried innumerable specks sparkling in red with two feelers-like thing growing on its head. The figure that was swimming mid-air with its fin-like limbs was just like a Clione. Well, a ten meters tall Clione was nothing but a monster, after all.

Without any preliminary movement, tentacles were shot out from the Clione's huge body. At the same time, jelly was spraying from its head just like a shower.

"Yue, attack it, too! Leave the defense to me! "Divine Interruption"!"

Using the derived skill, "Delayed Activation", Kaori activated the "Divine Interruption" she chanted beforehand. Nodding at Kaori, Yue went to Tio, and together they fired flame towards the huge Clione. Shia also changed Doryukken to firing mode and shot it.

The Clione was hit by all of their attacks, and its body exploded and scattered in all directions. *One hit kill!*, Yue and the other two raised a satisfied expression, but Hajime let out a warning to them.

"Not yet! Its presence is still here. Kaori, maintain the barrier… What's with this, the demonic beast's presence is all over the room…"

Hajime's perception abilities caught the presence of the demonic beast all over the room. Moreover, everywhere his Magic Eye see was dyed in reddish black color, as if the demonic beast was the room itself. It was a situation he had never encountered before, so naturally Hajime's eyes sharpened.

Right after, as if to sense his anxiety, the Clione that was scattered in all directions was regenerated in no time. Moreover, on its belly were the starfish-lookalike and sea snakes they encountered and defeated. They melted while raising sizzling sound.

"Hmm, it seems the demonic beasts this one thought as weak were truly ordinary demonic beasts, and they seem to be this guy's meal… Master. It doesn't matter if it keeps regenerating. But where is its magic stone?"

"Now that Tio-san mentioned it, why can't I see the magic stone although it is transparent?"

Agreeing to Tio's assumption, Shia was now looking at Hajime, but Hajime had a troubled expression while he looked for the location of magic stone of the huge Clione.

"… Hajime?" When Yue called him, Hajime scratched his head and reported what he saw.

"… None. That guy doesn't have magic stone."

His words made everyone dumbfounded.

"H-Hajime-kun? For it to not have magic stone… Then, does it mean it isn't a demonic beast?"

"I don't know. However, if I must say, that jelly's body, all of them are magic stone. My Magic Eye saw that guy's whole body is dyed in reddish black color. Also, be careful since this whole room is also dyed in the same color. Or maybe we are already inside that guy's stomach."

The same time Hajime told them about the shocking fact, the huge Clione began to attack them again. This time, not only did the tentacles attack while the jelly rained down, but its feet entered the sea water and some parts of its body were fired like a torpedo.

Hajime took out a black, large rifle from the "Treasure Box." The large rifle had a gas cylinder thing installed where the magazine should be loaded, and also an unbelievably large caliber.

That was natural. After all, it wasn't a rifle…

FWOOOOSH!!

It was a flamethrower. The Flame ore in tar form made the flamethrower sprayed flame of 3,000 °C. It was not aimed at the huge Clione, and neither at the tentacles nor the sprayed jelly. It was aiming at the "wall" that was giving reddish black reaction. The Clione was left to Yue and the other two.

Maybe because the huge Clione had a mimetic ability, the wall seemed to be not out of ordinary, but the flame released by Hajime burnt it and peel it off from the wall just like a wallpaper. Hajime was slightly relieved the one on the wall was not another huge Clione.

However, the transparent jelly kept appearing from the cracks on the wall no matter how much he burnt it, and finally it even appeared from under his feet. His shoe soles generated sizzling sound.

The attack on the real body by Yue and the other two was also increasing in intensity, and even the huge Clione seem to have finally gotten serious as jelly sprung up from the entire wall with a tremendous momentum. Moreover, the water level had raised before the party were aware of it. At first, it was around the thigh level, but now it has risen to around the waist. As for Yue, her chest area was already soaked by the water.

Yue and the other two had defeated the huge Clione so many times, but the surrounding jelly immediately gathered, and the end of the fight was nowhere in sight.

It was a terrible situation if they didn't find a way to defeat it, and they would die by drowning. While their fighting power was being reduced, they wouldn't be able to keep besieging the huge Clione. Even if they cast barrier magic and entered the submarine, it would melt unless they find the way to defeat it.

As such, Hajime decided to withdraw. However, all of the passages had been blocked by the jelly. Hajime frantically looked around. Then, he discovered a crack on the ground which generated a whirl.

"I will at least recover us from this situation. There's also a place under the ground. Well, I don't know where it is connected to, so brace yourselves!"

"Nh."

"Yes~."

"Understood."

"Okay!"

Receiving everyone's answer, Hajime, while turning the flamethrower around to burn the incoming jelly, used "Transmutation" towards the crack. The crack was forced to expand and gradually, a deep hole was opened.

While still underwater, Hajime took out a cylinder with length of 15 cm and diameter of 3 cm. In the middle was the mouthpiece part of a snorkel tube. It was small oxygen cylinder. It was created using the ore imbued with Spatial magic using Creation magic. Thus, the space inside where the oxygen was put into, expanded just like "Treasure Box."

However, while he was making preparation in Elisen, Hajime had prioritized the broken and lost equipment. In addition, it was hard for him to use Spatial magic so the space created was much narrower compared to "Treasure Box." Because of that, these small oxygen cylinder can only hold out for around 30 minutes.

Setting the time limitation in the corner of his mind, Hajime repeatedly "transmuted" the water, and before long, Hajime took out pile bunker from "Treasure Box" once there was no more reaction on the ground. After fixing the anchor under the water, it charged.

Screeech~!!!

Following that, he pulled the trigger to break the floor.

KABOooOOOOoom~!!!

Inside the water, a muffled thundering sound generated and spread with vibration.

In the next moment, water flowed into the penetrated hole with tremendous momentum. The seawater that had reached around the waist began to flow mightily all of a sudden, which resulted in Yue and the other three to be swept and thrown into the hole.

Inside the swift current, Hajime desperately braced against the current and took out a gigantic boulder and numerous incendiary grenades

from “Treasure Box.” Then, he threw them at the same time he was swept into the space below alongside with Yue and the other three.

Behind him, muffled roaring sounds rang out. However, he was unable to confirm whether he was successful in gaining even a little time against the huge Clione’s pursuit.

Chapter 93 : Inferiority Complex

“Cough, cough, ugh.”

“Huff huff, are you okay, Kaori?”

“Y-Yeah, somehow… Everyone is…”

In front of Kaori, who was coughing from drinking a large amount of seawater, were Hajime, whose hand was coiled on her waist, and a pure-white sand beach. There was nothing else beside those around her, but she could densely see packed mangrove-like trees in the distance, and the surface of the waving sea high in the sky. The seawater was like a barrier, preventing any intruder. It was a vast space.

“Looks like we are getting separated… Well, I gave everyone a smaller version of “Treasure Box,” so they should be able to do something by themselves.”

“… Nn.”

Hajime lightly said after letting go of Kaori, and fixed his hair. However, Kaori’s mind seems to be somewhere else.

While watching Hajime stand up and began to change his clothing, Kaori recalled what happened a while ago.

Hajime’s party attempted a strategic retreat from the huge Clione.

The place they fell into was a gigantic, spherical space with tens of tunnels, where there were spouting seawater with tremendous force. Or maybe it could be said that they were flowing from there; a place with storm-like and messy current.

Swept by the swift current, Hajime's party somehow managed to stick close together, but next the current mercilessly separated the party. Yue tried to control the current with magic, but it didn't work well because the current was too random. Shia controlled the weight of Doryukken in cooperation with Tio; a fine play.

Hajime had actually wanted to take out the submarine and ride it, but it was impossible inside the swift current. Clenching his teeth, Hajime took out ultra-heavy, compression ore, and tried to use the weight to overcome the current just like Shia.

At that time, by luck, he saw Yue getting swept towards him, and Yue would meet up with Hajime thanks to the current. Shia and Tio had already disappeared into a tunnel somewhere, and their figures could no longer be seen inside the space.

Hajime tried to reach out to Yue so she wouldn't get separated from him, but Kaori's figure was being swept to the lower side had entered his view. The pained gaze of Kaori's met Hajime's. He previously reached out to Yue before him, but his and Kaori's gaze had indeed met.

There were two choices.

If he catches Yue, Kaori would be swept alone into a tunnel. The same thing would happen to Yue if he was to catch Kaori. The current Hajime could only choose one of them. Within that moment, it felt like eternity. Hajime exchanged gazes with Yue, and he made a decision.

Using the weight from the ultra heavy compressed ore he took out from "Treasure Box," Hajime rushed below, and then he caught Kaori. Kaori's eyes were wide in surprise, but the two were immediately exposed to an even stronger swift current. Together, the two were thrown into a tunnel.

While being swept away, Hajime activated “Vajra” to protect Kaori in his arms, enduring it even when he was thrown at a rock wall. Then, he was able to see light coming from above once the current weakened and went up.

And there was the pure white sandy beach spreaded across the coastline.

“… Nee, Hajime-kun. Why… why did you save me?”

“Hah?”

Kaori questioned Hajime whose back was turned towards her. Hajime only tilted his head, thinking “what kind of question was that?”

“Why did you save me and not Yue?”

“Well, Kaori seemed to be dying and Yue can do something by herself. Yue’s eyes also told me to save Kaori.”

“… You really trust her, eh.”

“Isn’t that natural? We are partners, you know?”

“…”

The already depressed Kaori was even more depressed after hearing the answer. Suddenly, a shadow stretched over the downcast Kaori.

Puzzled, Kaori looked up and there was Hajime’s face very close to her own. His eyes and nose were right before her. A distance that would conclude in a kiss if he move even a little closer. Kaori felt as if she was sucked by Hajime’s eyes, and suddenly, her cheeks were pulled.

“Ift huwt! Waft au uing!” Kaori protested with teary eyes.

However, Hajime ignored Kaori’s protest and played with her soft cheeks without reserve for a while. After finally being released, Kaori looked up with a reproachful gaze while rubbing her red cheeks, but Hajime only snorted with “Hmph”.

"If you have time to be depressed, then it's better to use and move. We're inside a Great Dungeon, you know? Just until when will you stay wet like this? Or, are you trying to gain my sympathy?"

Hajime's sharp words made Kaori's face instantly reddened. It was of shame. She noticed what he unexpressed said, *isn't this the wrong place for that?*

"Th-There's no such a thing! I was just daydreaming. I-I will change my clothes soon. Sorry."

"…"

Kaori hurriedly stood up and began to take off her clothes after taking out substitute clothes from mini-"Treasure Box" (around the size of a house's storage) that was given to her before the party left Elisen. Hajime nonchalantly turned his back towards her. The normal Kaori would do an approach by saying, "It's okay to watch," though embarrassed, but the current Kaori hurriedly finished changing her clothes without saying anything.

"I-I am done… So, what should we do?"

"Let's see… Even if we go to seabed again, we still don't know where the others are… but there's nothing we can do other than keep searching. Those girls would probably do so as well."

After looking at the jungle nearby, Hajime turned around. Kaori nodded at him while smiling; a smile hiding her depressed heart. Hajime slightly narrowed his eyes at Kaori's smile, but he didn't say anything in the end and started to walk.

Advancing along the pure-white sandy beach, creating sounds as they walked, the two entered the jungle. The dense trees and bushes were cut by Hajime. Kaori was only following him from behind.

Then, Hajime suddenly halted and turned towards Kaori, put his hand on the back of Kaori's head as if to embrace her.

“Fue? Ah, umm, Hajime-kun? Wh-What’s with this sudden…”

Kaori blushed, but Hajime immediately separated and she instantly paled when she saw the thing on Hajime’s hand.

It was a spider. With size almost as big as a palm, it was moving its twelve legs with violet liquid dripping from it. Some of the legs grew like a normal spider while some grew from its back; a structure expressing it was capable of moving using both sides! It looked disgusting.

“Don’t let your guard down, okay? A Great Dungeon is vastly different compared to the surface of Orcus. Don’t think of it as the same or else you’ll experience pain.”

“U-Un. Sorry. I will be careful.”

“…”

The spider Hajime caught didn’t have magic stone, a normal poisonous spider. The fact that she was almost killed by creature other than a demonic beast, and how Hajime helped her, made Kaori even more depressed.

When she was still in Kouki’s party, she was an all-rounder, however, in Hajime’s party, she isn’t at all useful. It made Kaori panic more and more inwardly.

As such, Kaori put even more attention towards the surroundings which caused the conversation between the two to lessen, and they got out of the jungle with a subtle atmosphere between them.

Ahead of them was…

“This… isn’t this the so-called ship’s graveyard?”

“Amazing… those are sailing ships, but the size…”

In the rocky area ahead of the jungle were several partly rotted sailing ships lodged. The sailing ships were around a hundred meters in length

at the lowest, and in the far distant was an even bigger one with at least three hundred meters in length.

The bizarre spectacle made Hajime and Kaori unconsciously halted their advance. However, it didn't take a long time for Hajime and Kaori to regain their senses and entered the ship's graveyard.

They advanced by passing through the gaps between rocks, sometimes passing over them, while at other times, they walked on the ships.

"Even so… there are only battleships here."

"Un. But only the biggest one there seems to be a passenger boat. It has luxurious decorations on it…"

The ships in this graveyard didn't have cannons located at the starboard side like those battleship (sail-type) on earth. Even so, Hajime was able to conclude they were battleships because there were marks of fierce battle on all of the ships. From the appearance of the ships, they seemed to have received magic attacks. Some have their masts cleanly cut, burnt, carbonized decks, and petrified ropes and nets.

They didn't have any cannon, so they used long-ranged magic to defeat the enemies which was a battle method imaginable from the marks remained.

Then, Hajime's guess was proven to be a fact when he and Kaori were halfway through the ship's graveyard.

— UoOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

— WAaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!

"-!? What the!?"

"Hajime-kun! The surroundings are—!"

When they felt they heard shout of many men all of a sudden, the surroundings scenery began to distort. Hajime and Kaori stopped walking from the surprise and they observed the surroundings to

observe what was happening. The surrounding distortion became even more intense and before they were aware of it, Hajime and Kaori were already on a ship's deck, above the vast ocean.

Following that, they looked at their surroundings, it was not the ship's graveyard, but hundreds of sailing ships divided into two groups, confronting each other. Above the ships were people raising their weapons while shouting.

"Th-The heck is this…"
"Ha-Ha-Hajime-kun? Am I currently inside a dream? Hajime-kun, you are here, right? Right?"

Both Hajime and Kaori were taken aback, but they somehow managed to get out of their confusion, however, they weren't able to look at their surroundings.

While they did so, a big spark rose into the sky, generating firework-like loud voices followed by the hundreds of ships moving out simultaneously. The fleet on the side of the ship Hajime and Kaori rode on also moved out after the firework rose.

And when the ships approached a certain distance, they used the momentum to ram the other ships used its bodies, while magic were also fired.

GOoOOOOOOOO!!
DOoGAaAAAN!!
DOBAaAAAA!!!

"Owh!?"

"Kyaa!"

Flame bullets fired accompanied by roaring sounds and created holes in the ships' bodies. Huge tornadoes advanced aiming at the masts. The sea's surface froze, stopping the ships. And bullets of gray-colored sphere instantly petrified everything.

Even the deck Hajime and Kaori were on was hit by the flame bullets and began to blaze up grandly. The ship's crews immediately activated magic to draw up the sea water and extinguished the fire.

It was literally a battlefield where innumerable people and ships fought on. The fired magic clad in killing intent grazed their skins.

Hajime and Kaori absentmindedly watching these spectacle, and once again fire bullets fired from behind them. The bullets' courses were aimed straight towards Hajime and Kaori.

Hajime buried his question of why did they suddenly were involved in this war in his head, and he pulled out Donner because it was OK to kill everyone because they attacked first. Thus, he intercepted the fire bullets using the railgun.

The bullet fired was accompanied by explosive sound and a flash, but unexpectedly it didn't even hit the flame bullets much more intercepting them. The bullet flew into the sky, and it disappeared.

"What!?"

Raising surprised voice for the nth times, Hajime embraced Kaori by his side and began to evade.

"Wait, I will obstruct them! "Light Severance"!"

With Kaori's chant, the beginner-level defense magic of light attribute appeared.

Hajime tried to evade because the unknown magic kept going even after their cores were hit, but Kaori had activated her magic and couldn't move away from there. Reluctantly, he activated "Vajra" and waited for the flame bullets.

However, Hajime's worry proved to be groundless because Kaori's barrier completely blocked the flame bullets. With dubious expression, Hajime thought whether he just misfired while tilting his head, and he once again fired at the incoming flame bullets. Even this time, Hajime's

Magic Eye indeed saw the cores being hit, but the bullet just passed through the flame bullets and flew towards the day after tomorrow..

"… Is that it?"

Seeing that, Hajime was guessing why his attack wasn't effective and decided to try another method of attacking. Kaori tried to put up another barrier to block the incoming flame bullets, but Hajime stopped her and activated "Wind Claw" in Donner. Following that, he evaded, and at the same time, he slashed the flame bullets using "Wind Claw." This time, the flame bullets didn't pass through and slashed in two.

"Umm, Hajime-kun?"

"It doesn't seem to be an illusion nor was it a real thing. The physical attack didn't effective, but attacks that contained magic power are effective. Good grief, what's with this situation."

Hajime spat a sigh from this troublesome situation and "Gwaa," an agonized voice rang right from behind him. While wondering what it was, he turned around and there was a young man crouching while suppressing his abdomen, while his other hand was holding a cutlass. Looking carefully, there was a pool of blood below him and blood covered icicle rolling nearby. He must have been shot with the icicle.

"Are you okay!?," Kaori immediately raised her voice while approaching him, and then she used her healing magic. A pure-white light released from her and wrapped the man. He should be healed in a blink of an eye because Kaori was a "Healer"… or so she thought, but the result was unexpected. The moment the young man received Kaori's healing magic, he turned into light particles and disappeared.

"Eh? Eh? W-Why…" After a little pondering, Hajime told the confused Kaori what he thought had happened.

"Wasn't it because the effect and attribute of the magic didn't matter as long as it carried magic power?"

"… Then, I-I just… killed that person…"

“Kaori, this is not reality. Just think of it as “an illusion where we can move freely.” Besides, you can’t call something that disappeared by being healed a human.”

“Hajime-kun… un, you are right. I am sorry that I was confused a little there. But I am okay now.”

Though slight, Hajime said words of concern to Kaori. However, Kaori didn’t feel happy like the usual her, only drooping her shoulders apologizing. Then, she smiled to smooth things over. Seeing her reaction made Hajime inadvertently muttered the thing he had thought since earlier.

“… You keep apologizing, eh.”

“Eh? Did you say something?”

“No, nothing.” Hajime moved his gaze from Kaori.

It was not because of the subtle atmosphere drifting around Kaori, but because he felt ominous presences. When he looked around, the soldiers were shouting and attacking the nearby ships, and before they were aware of it, several men with dark gazes were looking at Hajime and Kaori.

Kaori noticed Hajime’s gaze and looked at the direction he was watching, and the men immediately came to attack Hajime and Kaori.

“For the God!”

“Long live! Eht-samaa!”

“Pagans! Die for our God!”

They were in frenzy. With bloodshot eyes, they declared while scattering saliva around. Completely abnormal.

He was able to guess it was a war between countries from how the fleets looked like, and he finally understood the reason for it. It was a religious war. If he strained his ears, he could hear the other soldiers in the other

fleets were shouting similar things. However, they were shouting different God's name.

Kaori could only stand in blank surprise inside the frenzied atmosphere.

Embracing Kaori from behind, Hajime thrust out and fired Donner over his shoulder. Only, the fired thing was not a bullet but mass of pure magic power. Using "Magic Power Compression" and "Magic Power Emission" derived from "Magic Power Manipulation," he was able to blow off magic power without affecting the target physically. In a sense, it was a flawless technique to disarm the target because human and even demonic beast wouldn't be able to move if their magic power was exhausted. This move had always been kept inside of him because he would not use such a lukewarm method on his enemy.

However, this lukewarm method was the most useful in this situation. The bright red bullet fired by Donner momentarily cut through the space and pierced the forehead of one of the frenzied, cutlass swinging soldier. Without stopping, the bullet hit the soldier behind the previous one, too, and their bodies instantly dispersed.

"Kaori! We are going to jump! Don't bite your tongue!"

"Eh? —Kyaaaaa!!"

It would be troublesome if they were surrounded on the deck, so Hajime jumped using "Aerodynamic" while embracing Kaori. Kaori screamed from the powerful momentum.

Kicking the soldier on the crow's nest, Hajime landed in one of four crow's nest on the masts.

Below them, the frenzied soldiers were looking up at Hajime and Kaori with bloodshot eyes.

Even though there were the enemies from other countries, too, somehow some of the men were targeting Hajime and Kaori. Moreover, the ones targeting them didn't have any distinction between allies and enemies.

Their numbers keeps increasing one after another just like a bad case of contagious virus.

Before even a moment passed and in front of their own enemies, the soldiers suddenly stopped moving and twisted their heads, staring at Hajime and Kaori. They immediately came crowding towards the two like a horror movie. The frenzied air even made Kaori pale.

“Now then, what shall we do to get out of this disgusting space?”

“… Maybe there’s something like… an exit?”

“We are in the middle of the sea, you know?”

“Maybe there’s an exit in one of these ships? … see, something like wherever door.”

Kaori recalled and compared it to the convenient tool of the blue cat robot. Looking at the surroundings, Hajime frowned and objected her idea because the ships were too numerous.

“… From what I can see, there’s at least six hundred ships here… it’s impossible to search one by one. Don’t you think we’ll be able to find the exit faster if the war ended?”

“Umm~, indeed, there are also the sunken ship… Then, shall we…end the war?”

“End it… I see, time to kill everyone, huh? Kaori also can say something extreme, eh.”

“Eh? Umm, I don’t mean that…”

“Yup, that must be it. No other thing comes to my mind, and I like it better this way.”

Firing bullets of magic power and shooting through the several soldiers climbing using the ropes on the mast, Hajime thought it would be better if he had make a magic gun. He thought so while he continued firing the bright red bullets along with “Remote Control” derived from “Magic

Power Manipulation," making them intercepted the incoming flame bullets.

"Kaori, I know you aren't proficient in offensive magic, but even healing magic becomes offensive magic here. And even if we don't know how to escape from here, it is the truth that we are being attacked, so let's knock them all down."

"O-Okay!"

Hearing Hajime's words, Kaori began her chant with resolute expression while trembling. The frenzied battlefield seemed to shave off at Kaori's mind, but she absolutely didn't want to show a disgraceful behavior to the important one beside her.

Hajime was glaring at the surroundings as if protecting her.

Looking down, allies and foes were mixed as they boarded the ship, killing each other. Unlike what happened when Hajime and Kaori attacked, the killing in this illusion was full of bloodshed.

On the deck were someone's entrails, cut limbs, and splattered heads. Everyone was repeatedly shouting "For the God," "Pagan," and "Divine Punishment," with frenzied eyes as they spread killing intent.

Within the fresh blood of the soldiers scattered just like a storm of cherry blossom, the crow's nest where Hajime and Kaori, no, it was more like the soldiers were obstinately targeting Hajime and Kaori.

Time to time, bright red bullets flew about in all directions, shooting through the enemies. Furthermore, they flew around Hajime and Kaori to protect them, positioned as both offense and defense at the same time.

However, the frenzied soldiers weren't even worried, repeatedly attempted suicide attacks. Tens of the soldiers used flight magic while there were those who approached by going from one mast to another. It could be seen that the fight was concentrated on the ship where Hajime and Kaori rode. Hajime's Magic Eye also caught the fluctuation of magic

power of highest-ranked magic from the hand of the magicians aiming at them.

At the time, Hajime thought of sniping them, but Kaori's chant ended and she activated highest-ranked magic of her.

"— — people, held out your arms as this is the place where Holy Mother smiling at, "Scripture"!"

Then, ripple of light spread into the battlefield with Kaori as its center.

The ripple throbbed as it expanded for so so many times, reaching one kilometer in radius. The enemy who touched by the ripple was wrapped by light.

Highest-ranked healing magic of light attribute, "Scripture."

It was a super wide-ranged healing magic with effect of healing everyone inside its area. The range itself was depended on the amount of user's magic power and proficiency, but at its worst, its effective range was 500 meters in radius. Moreover, if the user gave out the "sign" beforehand, it would be able to heal specific object. And normally this magic was used with tens of magician, and took a lot of time to chant along with its stupidly gigantic magic array. To be able to activate it in only one, two minutes alone was impossible unless one was a cheat-like character.

At the same time the light of "Scripture" activated by Kaori wrapped the battlefield, all soldiers inside the effective area had their bodies dispersed without distinction of ally or foe. When the magic ended, Kaori's body tilted from magic power exhaustion, and was thus promptly supported by Hajime.

"Ohh, a mass reproduction of the Mary Celeste, huh. You did great, Kaori. No, should I say as expected of you?"

"Ah, uh, th-there's no such a thing. Hajime-kun and the others are far more amazing…"

Honest praise from Hajime made Kaori's cheeks blush from embarrassed. She made a self-ridiculing smile as she thought Yue would be able to use more powerful magic quickly. Then, she muttered ""Replenish,"" to replenish the lost magic power from the pendant given by Hajime. Hajime had improved the pendant with magic array and the ability of taking out the stocked magic power by chanting because Kaori was incapable of directly manipulating magic power.

Hajime slightly knitted his eyebrows and wanted to say something when he saw Kaori's expression, but he put it aside for now because he had to deal with the new incoming enemies. The battle had restarted.

With the ineffectiveness of physical attack, it was a situation where the large amount of soldiers didn't falter against any kind of attack as they battled on the ship. Normally, it might be a hard situation, but there were cheat-like monsters present.

Big fleets of two countries were afterwards annihilated by the two humans in a span of one hour.

* * *

"… Uuh, cough, kafh, sorr-…"

"It's alright. Just endure it."

Immediately after the last soldiers were annihilated, their surroundings were once again distorted. They noticed that they had returned to ship's graveyard from before.

Wondering if the annihilation was indeed the correct answer, Kaori immediately sighed in relief, ran to the nearby rock, and vomited. However, she vomited nothing since the dinner she ate had already been digested, and thus she felt a pain from trying to vomit.

With tears accumulated in the corner of her eyes, Kaori used one hand to tell Hajime "Don't come," to stop him.

However, Hajime still approached her and rubbed her back. Kaori didn't want to show such a pitiful sight to him, but she felt comforted from the gentle and warm feelings transmitted to her back. Her nausea and spirit gradually recovered.

Hajime took out apple juice-like drink from "Treasure Box" and presented it to her. Kaori obediently drink it heartily and her energy returned. The sweet and fresh taste, flushed the sour taste of gastric juice.

"Sorry…"

Kaori who knitted her eyebrows and apologized for the trouble made Hajime narrowed his eyes.

"Well, I think it is inevitable. Even I feel disgusted by it. I never thought humans would be so frenzied because of their blind belief. …Anyway, let's rest for now. Even I want to recover my considerably used magic power."

"… Un. Say, Hajime-kun. What was that illusion? Is it related to these ship wreckages."

Kaori stood up then sat on the nearby rock, and then she asked him. Hajime took a little time to think before told her his conjecture.

"It is just a maybe, but I think the illusion might have been reproducing a battle in the past. … well, it seemed there's also some improvement to attack those challenging the dungeon… or it might have been the concept of this dungeon."

"Concept?"

"Yeah. Tio said it when we were in "Guryuu-en Great Volcano". She said 'isn't it possible that each of the dungeon had its own concept prepared by the "Liberators"?' If that's true, then here is…"

"…To know the misery brought by the Mad Gods… maybe?"

"Aah, I think so, too."

Continuing Hajime's words by muttering the answer, Kaori recalled the spectacle from before, her face once again turned pale, and her body trembled as if she was suffering from a cold.

What made Kaori felt sick was the madness from the soldiers. Their behavior and speech were exactly of those so called "Fanatic" while she also couldn't help but feel disgusted from the killing.

The people continued to laugh loudly in a frenzy even when blood were spraying from their bodied. There were even those who died from gouging their own hearts out, raised it towards the sky as an offering to their Gods. There was also an older brother who stabbed through his own younger brother just to attack Hajime and Kaori, while the younger one laughed proudly. War itself was a place filled with madness, but one they just saw was far too ghastly. And it was wage all "For our God," so…

Seeing Kaori covering her mouth because she couldn't endure it, Hajime sat right beside Kaori and grasped Kaori's hand. He couldn't leave Kaori, who sickened by the madness, alone. Kaori was slightly surprised, looked at Hajime, relaxed, and squeezed Hajime's hand back.

"Hajime-kun, thank you…"

"Don't mind it. I understand… the pain from being exposed to the madness. I felt that when I fell into the abyss…"

"… Then, how? … Wait, there's no need for you to answer… It was… Yue-san, right?"

"Yeah, it was because of her. If I hadn't met her inside the abyss… I wonder how I would have ended up."

Hajime looked into the distance in affection and nostalgia. He was surely recalling the time he met Yue. Seeing his expression made Kaori felt her chest squeeze.

"It's mortifying. To defend, to protect Hajime-kun… I wanted to do that. But even if I said that, it's not like I can do anything. Since it's me… who I couldn't even protect a promise. Ah~, Yue is a really powerful enemy~."

Kaori joking laughter made Hajime narrowed his eyes again. Kaori's smile was not the usual warm, positive smile because it might have also included self-torment and self-ridicule.

"… You've been apologizing since we came here, and don't make such a smile."

"Eh? Ummm…"

Hajime's sudden words made Kaori raised "?" above her head. However, her smile immediately collapsed and her expression stiffened from Hajime's next words.

"… Listen, Kaori. Why did you follow us here?"

"… That's… am I just a burden after all?"

The downcast Kaori made Hajime sigh, and he didn't answer her question.

"I remember the talk we had under the moonlight while drinking that disgusting tea that day. That's why, honestly, I don't think it's weird that you have goodwill for the current *me*."

"Hajime-kun, I…"

"However, I have no intention of denying it. I am sure Kaori had things only you can see, and that's what stirred your heart. Thus, there's no meaning for me to deny the decision you made. I have given you my answer, "even so" I think it's a good thing that you favor me. Even Shia didn't even feel discouraged. Rather, she recently made me seriously worry if she was going to attack me in my sleep."

Hajime recently felt the dread as he thought of the rabbit-eared girl with bugged physical strength. Seeing such a Hajime, Kaori made a wry smile in agreement.

"… Un, I think her aggressiveness and positiveness amazing."

"I treated her harshly at the beginning. I didn't think of anyone as "special" other than Yue… I honestly thought she was going to give up quickly."

"…"

"No matter how harsh I treated her, how I treated Yue as special, and she was always neither angry nor did she cry, but she seemed happy about it. She couldn't compare to Yue in magic usage because she didn't have aptitude in magic, and even if she was defeated in a mock battle against Yue, she didn't stop to move forward. She didn't cower even though she was attacked by her own inferiority complex."

"I-I, thing like inferiority complex…"

Kaori who silently listening to Hajime, couldn't help to object and stood up. However, she was exhausted and immediately sat back.

"Didn't you notice it? You've been apologizing since we came here. Even the way you smiled is completely different than the usual."

"Eh?"

"Listen, Kaori. Don't keep looking down. Raise your face and look into my eyes."

That being said, Kaori finally noticed she had been looking down for a while now. Before, she made sure to look at the other person's eyes when talking… thus, when Kaori met Hajime's gaze she realized.

"Listen here, I will not say it for the second time. I love Yue. Even if I thought of others as "important," it won't change that only Yue is

"special." So if you feel pain from it, if you feel you are inferior compared to Yue… Kaori, you should part from me."

"Kh…"

The blunt words made Kaori look down again. Hajime continued talking even though he did see her reaction.

"The reason I allowed Kaori to accompany us at that time is because of the same reason as Shia; I judged it'd be the best for Kaori to be by my side, because I trust Kaori. You understood my feelings, "even so" you moved ahead for your wish. That's why I thought it'd be okay for you by my side if you favor me… but, I don't feel the same way now."

When Hajime ended his words, he separated his hand from the downcast Kaori's. Then, he spun the ending words.

"Please think carefully about it once more. Why did you come along with us, and if should you stay by my side from now on… Kaori is not Shia. Shia likes Yue, too. …Depending on your answer, I will send you back to your best friend (Yaegashi)."

"I-I…"

Kaori wanted to say something as she watched the hand separating from her own, the words wouldn't come out.

Inside the awkward atmosphere, Hajime urged Kaori to move because it was necessary for them to approach the biggest sailing ships enshrined at the distance.